QLIMS helps a confectionery testing lab ensure a standard of quality and safety you can taste.

For the past 11 years OnQ Software has worked with one of the world's leading confectionery brands to bring the highest levels of testing for their raw and packaging materials.

With thousands of employees working in factories throughout Australia, the company turns over in excess of $1 billion and exports their products to dozens of countries around the world.

OnQ software

Underpinning their success is an unwavering commitment to **quality, reflected in everything** from the quality of the raw ingredients, the packaging, the processing, to the pride that its staff take in their work.

Challenges

To meet these high quality standards, all materials entering the factory are tested before being approved for use. This sees the onsite laboratories testing between 15,000 and 20,000 samples a year.

The senior Site Chemist who oversees all the labs explains the importance of testing and the challenges the laboratories face, “Material testing is business critical for the protection of our brands and customers. We need to have complete traceability. If we can’t verify material as fit for purpose and show traceability, we can’t clear it into the plant for use in our products.”

"We have over 150 raw materials for our products and hundreds of packaging materials as well. Some of the materials are made at multiple sites by the same supplier, and each site will potentially have a different rating."

It's not just the sheer volume of materials being tested that impacts upon the laboratories, but the complexity of the testing protocols. Each material delivered to our company is graded according to the risk level and the supplier's rating. If a material is considered high-risk and from a reputable supplier it will be tested more frequently than a low-risk product.

Given it's not feasible for the confectioner to test every material that comes to the factory, the laboratories require a level of automation to manage the testing frequency. "Depending on the material, testing may occur on every fifth or even tenth delivery".

This added level of complexity means the software has become an integral part of the process. "It would be impossible to keep control of the testing without QLIMS."

The solution

In 2006 the confectioner engaged OnQ Software to implement a customised LIMs system that would allow the manufacturer to test large volumes of materials, with algorithms managing test frequency depending on their risk assessment of the material, supplier and site.

- **QLIMS system**
- **Integrations**
- **Business specific customisations built into QLIMS**

The process

Two laboratories test raw materials for the presence of contaminants such as Salmonella and E. coli, as well as assessing the slip, gauge and width of packaging materials.

Their Site Chemist explains how QLIMS helps manage this, "From our warehouse deliveries I'll simply key in the QLIMS material codes, batch numbers, container numbers, palette numbers, all the data that we need to clear material into the plant." The QLIMS system will then alert the laboratories if a material is due for testing or can be cleared immediately.

QLIMS allows laboratory users to configure the supplier testing requirements via the Sample Type Manager. Using reduced testing methodology, we can specify how often testing is required on materials on a per supplier basis.

QLIMS reporting has been customised according to the confectioner's stringent testing criteria. Once tests have been completed the materials will be given either a green light or red light to proceed into the warehousing system.

The laboratories also go through rigorous external audits every year. QLIMS helps make the process easier, giving complete traceability of materials, "QLIMS supports me in providing evidence to answer the audit questions. I can demonstrate where a pallet of material has gone from cradle to grave."

The results

In food manufacturing laboratories there is simply no room for error. The QLIMS system is essential for the business to manage traceability to guarantee the quality their customers expect, and to protect its valuable brand reputation.

The Site Chemist explains how QLIMS has become an integral part of the confectioner's quality assurance over the past 11 years, "If we had a recall for any reason, I would be able to immediately know which pallets of raw materials went into that particular item.

The tracking is so good that I have immediate visibility of where that material has come from and gone to from the moment it's delivered into the warehouse, to the moment it leaves the site. I can show which particular line it was used on, what time it was on that line and what goods it ended up in.

"That simply wouldn't be possible without a system like QLIMS."

Final thoughts?

"The QLIMS system is very intuitive, even for people who are not 'technical'. We've been able to contact OnQ Software any time for support and rate the services highly."

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